[review of] David Henley and Henk Schulte Nordholt (eds.), Environment, Trade and Society in Southeast Asia: A Longe Durée Perspective (Leiden: Brill, 2015, 262 pp., ISBN 978900428841).

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David Henley and Henk Schulte Nordholt (eds.), ***Environment, Trade and Society in Southeast Asia: A Longue Durée Perspective*** (Leiden: Brill, 2015, 262 pp., ISBN 978900428841).

The *longue durée* is back in fashion. The thought-provoking and much debated *History Manifesto* by Jo Guldi and David Armitage (Cambridge University Press 2014), for example, commends the return to analysis over the long-term, as propagated by the famous French historian Fernand Braudel. The volume under review, published in honour of the leading environmental historian of Indonesia, Peter Boomgaard, also hails the *longue durée*, and every author in this book refers explicitly to either Braudel or the long-term. Are such efforts worthwhile? Does the *longue durée* offer new insights that might otherwise have been overlooked?

Some of the advantages of the *longue durée* are clear from the start. Analysing deforestation in the Philippines over the long-term, Greg Bankoff is able to demonstrate the exceptional rate at which forests were depleted between 1950 and 1987, even though humans exerted profound influence in the forests from early on. William Clarence-Smith shows the difficulties which colonial powers encountered time and again when they tried to breed imported, larger horses in Southeast Asia, as only the smaller horses that had lived in the area for centuries, probably the descendants of Tibetan ponies, were able to adapt to tropical conditions. There are also political continuities: informal networks with a high degree of patronage and clientelism dominated Indonesian politics in the past and still endure in the present day, enabling Henk Schulte Nordholt to explain the fragmented nature of citizenship in that country.

Braudel's concept of the *longue durée* also paid particular attention to geography and the environment. In this field, Jan Wisseman Christie describes how the highly fertile soil of Mataram enabled early state formation in the first millennium CE; this despite breaks in development because of volcanic eruptions that impacted the coalition between politics and religion, leading to a new syncretic Hindu-Buddhist belief system and a shift of the core political region from Central Java to the East. In a similar vein, Anthony Reid argues that recurrent tsunamis and earthquakes made Indonesian and Philippine port-cities vulnerable, leading to rather low degrees of population growth before the nineteenth century, among other things. Low fertility rates were another cause of stagnating demographics in the Philippines, as examined by Linda Newson, due to the high cost of the dowry system that encouraged people to postpone marriage; the practice

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of penis piercing, which was said to increase status but resulted in couples having less sex; and the high rates of abortion and infanticide, due to the wish to avoid having too many children and dividing up the family heritage, thereby condemning one's descendants to poverty. The *longue durée* also plays a helpful role in the contribution by Heather Sutherland, in which she analyses the rate of population growth in Makassar, a major regional hub on the island of Celebes that turned into a true cosmopolitan port in the decades before the arrival of the Dutch. Remarkably, Makassar did not experience massive de-urbanization after the establishment of VOC rule, a finding that overturns previously held scholarly opinion, which had been based on a misinterpretation of the sources.

Jean Gelman Taylor shows how European domination facilitated the global exchange of information through visual resources such as paintings, prints and photographs, enabling the world to become more familiar with Southeast Asia over the course of the last three centuries. The scope of the *longue durée* is even more impressive in Raquel Reyes' contribution. Whereas Europeans started to gather *naturalia* for scientific information from Southeast Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, much less known is the fact that the Chinese preceded the Dutch and other collectors in this regard, with the result that pearls, coral, birds with brilliant feathers, aromatic woods, resins, ivory and rhino horn were already being transported over large distances from the third century BCE onwards. This finding connects well to the contribution by Kwee Hui Kian on the long-term dominance of the Chinese in inter-insular trade, which cannot be put down simply to the readiness of Chinese traders to integrate in local society and marry local women, or the strength of their networks and social capital, since in these respects they did not differ significantly from other ethnic traders. Factors that were significant, however, were the use of small coins minted by local Chinese merchants, which proved extremely handy for trade; the favors bestowed by colonial powers on the Chinese as trade intermediaries, in particular after violent clashes with the local population; and last but certainly not least, growing demand in China itself for bulk products. These findings, in turn, link well to the debate on Anthony Reid's thesis on the Asian 'Age of Commerce', coinciding roughly with the period from 1450 to 1680. David Henley discusses the poor quantitative evidence for this 'Age', pointing to the much more substantial growth in trade volume in the nineteenth century, along with the opening up of Southeast Asia to global trade well before the arrival of the Europeans.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning: does the *longue durée* 'work' in this volume? The answer must be a definitive 'yes'. Taking account of the long-term opens up the analysis to new viewpoints, something that might have been much more difficult to achieve by taking a short-term perspective. At the same time, however, much of the present analysis of this volume relies on existing research that is based on in-depth studies with a shorter time

span. Obviously, both are needed. Since the *longue durée* is neglected all too often, this volume restores the balance between the short term and long-term in a positive way.

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